

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 615

CS 505 115

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TITLE Persuasive Fund Raising: The Psychology of Student Entrepreneurship.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Meeting of the Public Relations Society of America (Detroit, MI, November 10-13, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advertising; *Entrepreneurship; Field Experience Programs; *Fund Raising; Higher Education; Organizational Communication; *Persuasive Discourse; Publicity; *Public Relations; Salesmanship; School Community Relationship; Speech Curriculum; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

A curriculum designed for public relations students in a persuasion class at Indiana State University provided them with the theory of persuasion and then gave them the opportunity to apply the theory by doing volunteer work for a community client. The course has four objectives: (1) to provide students with entrepreneurial experience and practical application of classroom theory and public relations tools, (2) to increase students' working knowledge of special events, (3) to give students the responsibility of designing and executing a job description contract with a client, and (4) to encourage students' personal autonomy and initiative through working on a management team where deadlines are inevitable. Although the most important factor in the final grade for the course is the team's accountability to the client in terms of measured results and accomplishment of objectives, other factors such as the team's portfolio and its members' professional attitude are also considered. Peer evaluation and the final exam also contribute to the grade. This program has been successful because it bridges the gap between theory in the classroom and practical application. However, more research is needed to reduce the distance between the classroom and the real world. (DF)

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PERSUASIVE FUND RAISING: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Paper presented to the Educators Section
Public Relations Society of America
Detroit, Michigan
November 10-13, 1985

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Abstract

PERSUASIVE FUND RAISING: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This paper presents the curriculum design used in a Persuasion Class which gives the public relations student applicable knowledge of the art of persuasive fund raising. The class provides the theory of persuasion and the opportunity to apply this theory in a key entrepreneurial position for a community client. In the active position of a fund-raising executive, the student becomes a goal setter, an activities director, a schedule coordinator, and a manager who envisions the bottom line of accountability and results. The paper focuses on the many facets involved (the client-agency relationship, the community environment and the personal characteristics of the management team members). A college graduate with this type of experience in the world of work may have a job-hunting advantage because the experience provides trial employment and contact with the professionals.

PERSUASIVE FUND RAISING: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social responsibility in public affairs is a rapidly expanding phenomenon of our times. A changing attitude in social values of the United States is demanding a new public policy toward social concerns. Today a corporation has a dual challenge of blending economic leadership with social responsibility.¹ The majority of organizations have incorporated a service standard for giving more assistance to their community through fund raising, personal contributions and endowments.² The point is evident that corporations have been encouraging their professional executives to be volunteers for community activities. For the first time, corporations are being duly rated on their contributions and services to society.³ The literature points out that "corporate donations are becoming less a function of charity and more an established part of conducting business. Today, many companies employ someone who spends 75 percent of work time on contributions."⁴ Not only does this changing work climate meet local needs, but it has also proven to be an image-building marketing device.⁵ Publics have a definite perception of a company and this perception is formulated on the basis of the company's communication and action with its societal community.⁶

On the practical or applied level, the high visibility of contributing to the public interest can be a subtle but impactful form of corporate advertising. If corporate advertising does put a company in charge of its own identity, social responsibility may be the key. In response to this trend,

liberal arts colleges are revising the curriculum and affirming the urgent need to include the theory of social responsibility.⁷

The purpose of this paper is to share the curriculum design that I use in the Persuasion class to give the public relations student applicable knowledge of the art of persuasive fund raising. The class provides the theory of persuasion and the opportunity to apply this theory in a key entrepreneurial position for a community client. In the active position of a fund-raising executive, the student becomes a goal setter, an activities director, a schedule coordinator, and a manager who envisions the bottom line of accountability and results. As an entrepreneur, the student participates in the entire process--from fact finding to overall planning and programming, to implementation, and finally to the evaluation of the entire event. The paper focuses on the many facets involved (the client-agency relationship, the community environment and the personal characteristics of the management team members). Moreover, this classroom design sets the groundwork for preparing a workable portfolio that displays proof of actual experience in writing, fund raising, development of promotional materials, organization and strategic special event planning.

Review of the Literature

The Greek philosopher Aristotle purported that persuasion was the core of the education of the Greeks. In those early days, the study was called rhetoric and it was defined as "the faculty of observing in a given case the available means of persuasion."⁸ Aristotle's three "modes of persuasion"--

ethos, pathos and logos, are still studied in the classroom and are still used in practice. Ethos reveals the character and credibility of the person. Every company's ethos or reputation affects the sales of products, employee attitudes, community relations, and profit.⁹ The second mode, pathos instills emotional appeal; it is a two-way process in which the listener must participate in order to bring about a change in attitude. Lance points out that public relations functions are both psychological and personal, and the practitioner interacts as a "linking pin" between the organization and the external publics.¹⁰ Finally, the third mode, logos is the logical appeal; it is the proof or apparent proof. For instance, the literature offers proof that there has been a phenomenal attitudinal change in individual, corporate and foundation giving. Figures in the 1984 edition of Giving USA, the publication of the National Council on Fund Raising, reveal that Americans have a greater understanding, concern and awareness; they feel a revitalized need to support the demands of the changes and the needs of society.¹¹

Of the innumerable definitions of public relations, one that my students remember is, "Getting caught in the act of doing something good." Today, doing good in a community gives a corporation a competitive head start both at home and abroad.¹² The signs are conspicuous that the public relations practitioner is spending more time in persuasive fund-raising campaigns and in other areas of social responsibility.¹³

Monitoring students' activities as they plan a fund-raising campaign with professional clients can be tedious and tense, but the experience is invaluable to students. The practical experience gives them an upper hand in

job preparation. As one professor told a businessman, "It is time consuming, but what if surgeons banned all students from the amphitheater and never were willing to stand by while an intern wielded a scalpel under supervision?"¹⁴ Educators have an ethical responsibility to align themselves with change and respond to the professional needs of their students.

For the past several years, students in my public relations classes have not only been involved in internships at an on-the-job location, but they have also contracted with clients while still in the confines of the classroom. In the Public Relations Campaign class, they have designed and executed the following promotional and fund-raising events for professional off-campus organizations:

"A Sugar. . .Ball," a fund-raising dance for the Diabetes Association.
Amount Earned \$500.00.

"A Spring Run," a six mile race for the YMCA. Amount earned \$350.00.

"A Penny a Pin," a fund-raising campaign in cooperation with the bowling leagues for Special Olympics. Amount Earned \$812.00

"Buck Day," a third annual fund-raising event for the United Way.
Amount Earned \$1,115.00

"Downtown's the Place to Be," a third promotion for the Downtown Merchants' Council

"Jump for Heart," a fund-raising for the American Heart Association.
Amount Earned \$725.00

"Flower Your Sweetie," a spring fund-raising for the Diabetes Association. Amount Earned \$700.00

"An Evening of Wine Tasting," a fund-raising for Cerebral Palsy Assn.
Amount Earned \$720.00

"Child Abuse Prevention," publicity for Christina Crawford's appearance

"Twisting the Night Away," a fund-raising ball for Cerebral Palsy Assn.
Amount Earned \$3,000.00

"Without a Doubt, Put it Out," an information campaign for the American
Cancer Society

The most dramatic change that occurred was the attitudinal change of the students. Many of them became so engrossed and dedicated to their not-for-profit agency client that they continued to volunteer after the class was over.

Curriculum Design

Objective of the Course

The first objective is to give the student entrepreneurial experience and practical application of classroom theory and public relations tools. The second objective is to increase the student's working knowledge in special events, campaigns, promotions, and other areas of public relations. The third objective is to give the student the responsibility of designing and executing a job description contract with a client, including the development and use of promotional materials for a major fund-raising event, an awareness promotion, or an information campaign. These materials will become a part of a portfolio evidencing specific skills to be used in job seeking. Finally, a fourth objective is to give the student the personal autonomy and initiative needed to work on a management team where stringent deadlines are the bottom line for success.

Orientation to the World of Work

Junior/senior standing is a requirement for entrance in the course. Individual student interviews before acceptance would be desirable. In my initial meeting with the recruits, I strive to separate the "wheat from the chaff," by describing the minimum requirements. I inform each student from the beginning, of the time involved in this performance-oriented class and the dedication and conviction needed to receive an acceptable grade. With excellence as a mandate, the following topics are discussed: professional profile, interpersonal attitude, appearance, image, initiative, assertiveness, responsibility and confidentiality. Dismissal from a team results in a failing grade. Since the course has a demanding time factor, students are encouraged to drop if they have a heavy semester schedule.

Historical and Theoretical Background of Public Communication Campaigns

Lectures (with discussions) concerning the historical background of public communication campaigns from the colonial era to the twentieth century are presented. The multiplicity of past, present and ongoing campaign issues in our country is pointed out, as well as the fact that behavioral change and the tenacity to solve social problems are characteristic of our culture. Campaign issues are a familiar and indispensable part of the American way of life and the messages of change from the channels of public service programs exert a greater demand for volunteers and for corporate social

responsibility.¹⁵

Target themes, slogans, logotypes and early publicity are highlighted in the lectures. The ongoing process of the attempt at social control by special interest groups is reviewed. As a corollary, the procedures for constructing a campaign, the five stages of campaign development,¹⁶ the causes for success,¹⁷ or failure¹⁸ and the importance of one's publics¹⁹ are examined. Stringent policies concerning the handling of all monies through the departmental money account are established. Finally, the reiteration of the necessity of professionalism in communication press releases, public service announcements and other forms of publicity, ties together the state of the art for student preparation to begin.

Research and Interviewing for Acceptable Client

Often the client who comes searching for volunteer help is not necessarily the client who is willing to adapt to our needs for attaining professional experience. Needless to say, organizations that are seeking someone to merely do their legwork are not what we are looking for. This explains why I inaugurate the first client interaction in order to survey needs and establish criteria. Only those clients who have written policies and procedures are considered. Ideally, the clients who have proved to be the most beneficial to the student's training are those who not only have an executive available for consultations and advice but who also give the team members creative freedom to research, plan, communicate, and have total autonomy in executing the final event.

Although we never advertise for clients, we receive calls and letters from old and new clients requesting our services. In our community, during the past three years, we have developed reciprocity with special clients who depend on us as we depend on them. Our established clients include The United Way of Vigo County, The Hamilton Center for Mental Health, Downtown City Council, American Heart Association, Special Olympics, American Diabetes, United Cerebral Palsy of Wabash Valley, Indiana State University Travel Program, Terre Haute Boys Club and YMCA. However, I do add one or two new clients each semester for variety, and I may temporarily discontinue service with some clients whose needs may not appear as critical as others on our list.

At the end of each semester, I ask each student to write an evaluation of the client and of the work experience, along with an opinion as to whether the client should be continued. Student recommendations are an important aid in weeding out marginal clients. As previously mentioned, we do have a growing backlog of organizations requesting our services. This reserve is not only a compliment to our program, but it gives the students a selective advantage.

Matching of Organizational Needs and Individual Interest

Our work begins on the first day of class. The syllabus lists the clients whom we will be assisting for the semester. Students are requested to name their first, second and third choices and to sketch a proposal for a

campaign or event for their first choice. The rationale for this early effort is to encourage independent and creative thinking by each student before the opportunity arises to form a coalition with someone as a friend rather than as a co-worker. In many cases it is an advantage to a management team if its members come from a broad range of disciplines. It is not essential that team members like each other or even that they be friends; but it is imperative that they function for the success of the team as a whole, regardless of their personal relationship. My lectures focus on Drucker's theory that a management team must follow stringent requirements in order that all tasks point toward the success of the whole.²⁰

Typically, the next step before I assign the students into client teams, is to give a speaking assignment for "Passport Exchange."

ICE BREAKER: Passport Exchange: Subject is YOU

Introduce yourself to the other members of the class in a statement requiring not more than three minutes. Tell them interesting highlights of your life, including your education to date, your plans, hobbies, interests, favorite sports, recreations, travel experiences, etc. Tell them the things about yourself that you would find interesting to know about them. HIGHLIGHT YOUR STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES.

Information on strengths and weaknesses serves as an aid in team member placement and this personal message reduces some of the anxiety about working with strangers on a team.

Formal Meeting of Client, Management Team, Instructor

The client is asked to give us his preference as to the type of event i.e., an information campaign, a community awareness project, a fund raiser or

both, as well as the budget for out-of-pocket expenses. It is extremely important that the client be openly involved in establishing the written objectives. The tracker for each management team is asked to carefully record the conversation of the client as these expectations will be the basis for the formulation of the team's Contract of Objectives. This initial meeting with the client includes a discussion of the available budget, photocopy facility, media arrangements, and policies and procedures of the organization. After this formal meeting, the management team is ready for further brainstorming, fact finding and research in order to follow the most effective strategy to accomplish the general goal.

Management Team Contract

The Management Team Contract is designed by the team members and follows the basic public relations method.

- I. Definition of General Objective
 - A. Research and Feedback
 - B. Planning and Programming
 1. Dates
 2. Strategies to be used
 - C. Communication and Action
 1. Professional flyer/brochure
 2. Public Service Announcements
 3. Press releases

4. Implementation of strategies

D. Evaluation

1. Objectives matched with results
2. Final concise, media report stating results

II. Final Oral presentation for peers and clients

Management Team

Management Team

Management Team

Management Team

Management Team

CLIENT

DATE

Management by Objectives (MBO)

Lectures and discussions stress the fact that success does not just happen and that accomplishments are the result of careful planning and creative programming efforts. Following the instructional philosophy of Drucker on managing by objectives, I attempt to instill his concept that although each team member will contribute in a different manner, according to his/her area of expertise, each must have an overall view of the general objective. However, idealistically, each manager on the team must set individual objectives in order that he have self-control and responsibility for his/her area of specialized work.²¹

Their efforts must all pull in the same direction, and their contributions must fit together to produce a whole--without gaps, without friction, without unnecessary duplication of effort. . . . each manager's job must be focused on the success of the whole.²²

Planning and setting attainable objectives may be the most difficult task for the team. An important factor to consider is that objectives should be neither too easy nor too difficult to attain. New team members have a tendency to be too idealistic and to list objectives that will be difficult to attain. They must continually be aware of their mindpower, manpower, and available money.²³ It would be desirable to hold a dry run and try to build a foundation under their idealistic objectives. Frequent reference is made to former student campaigns. Moreover, I invite former successful team managers to speak about their experiences. Team members are encouraged to follow the planning process of Samuel C. Certo in establishing sound objectives:

- Step 1 Stating organizational objectives
- Step 2 Listing alternative ways of reaching objectives
- Step 3 Developing premises upon which each alternative is based
- Step 4 Choosing best alternative for reaching objectives
- Step 5 Developing plans to pursue chosen alternative
- Step 6 Putting plans into action²⁴

Team members must openly discuss their capabilities to know what they can and cannot do. For each objective set, I require a list of tasks to be accomplished in order to execute the long-term general objective.

Public Relations Information Schedule

This schedule lists the specific objectives and the tasks that must be completed in order to accomplish them, as well as the person responsible for

each task, from start to finish. A daily planner format listing specific and intricate details is to be prepared two weeks in advance. At the end of the first two weeks, the next two weeks will be planned. This allows time for inevitable changes. The itinerary for the day of the special event must follow a precise pattern.

1. Step by step or minute by minute detailed itinerary
2. All participants must be called on the evening before or the morning of the event. All previous communication has been in writing.
3. All participants must sign an indemnity agreement
4. Plan to have as much control over the variables that seemingly could be uncontrollable.
 - a. volunteers
 - b. media
 - c. audience
 - d. team member
 - e. weather (rain date)

Instructor's Weekly Group Progress Meeting

Each management team has a standing twenty-minute appointment scheduled in the instructor's office weekly for questions, reporting individual progress, and ventilating campaign problems. Each team member reports orally on his time card (5 by 7) by half hours of all work, and records a daily log of activities; e.g., telephone contacts, number, purpose of call, copy of letter sent, face-to-face interviews, etc. Each team manager initials his/her time card, and the card is placed in the instructor's file. An overall grade is given for the entire file. This tracking system measures individual student performance throughout the campaign. Week, month and day must be placed on all copies of the daily log. The individual team cards are compared with the

Gantt Chart²⁵ of production and time control and the Public Relations Information Schedule. The tracker of each team provides the instructor with a schedule of tasks to be accomplished for the following week.

Team Managers Control System

Awareness of potential group problems is necessary. Far less publicized aspects of team work are jealousies, fears, dislikes, confusions, anxieties and "spectatoritis" on the part of some of the team members. (I point out the possibility of becoming a cohesive team or a divided team.)

Robert Freed Bales notes the fantasy of a team culture:

As the individual person creates and maintains a system of symbols with other persons in a group, he enters a realm of reality, which he knows does or can surpass him, survive him; which may inspire or organize him, and which may threaten to dominate him as well.²⁶

At the onset it is essential for the team to formulate written policies as to scheduling, place and time of meetings, telephone conferencing, and absentee rules. A firm "no excuse" policy could be included. Certainly there is a necessity for all team members to have an agenda-setting device such as a personal pocket calendar that correlates with the weekly team calendar and the Public Relations Information Schedule.

Each team is responsible for developing a Program Evaluation Review Technique (PERT) Chart weekly. The PERT Chart is a systems concept that was created by the Navy to aid in planning a project and having a visual picture to evaluate progress. Utilizing a PERT network emphasizes to each team manager that his/her ability to complete a task is critical for the success of

the entire team project.²⁷

Team Tracker

Even though management by objectives gives self-control and self-discipline,²⁸ there is a need for continuous evaluation. An assigned "tracker" on each team is needed to measure and ensure that good intentions develop into good performance. The "tracker" should ideally have the personality of a perfectionist and should also receive a bonus. The following duties are requested of the tracker:

1. Keep track of a large weekly calendar indicating tangible short-term objectives and their deadlines.
2. Correlate the detailed weekly calendar with the total overview of the Public Relations Information Schedule.
3. Keep track of Gantt Chart of production and time control to be shared at instructor's weekly progress meeting.
4. Keep track of all copy, e.g., news releases, letters, P.S.A.s, posters, flyers, brochures, etc., and all other publicity.
5. Be responsible for placing all production materials in the final group portfolio.
6. Show Gantt Chart of production tasks completed and PERT Chart of future week objectives to be accomplished at instructor's weekly progress meeting.

Final Creative Presentation

Each management team will make a one-hour professional presentation before the members of the class and their community client. They are graded

on their professional attitude, adherence to time deadlines and objectives, presentation technique, organization, clarity, effectiveness and excellence. Each team manager must participate in the team effort on an equal basis.

Evaluation

The most important factor in the final grade (30 percent) is the team's accountability to the client in terms of measured results and the accomplishments of contracted objectives. Carrying equal grade value (30 percent) are the final presentation, team portfolio, professional attitude of team members, meeting of deadlines, and overall team effort. Each team is given a team project grade. No team member can attain a higher grade than the team grade; however, an individual can attain a lower grade than the team grade. Peer evaluation will make up 20 percent of the grade and the final exam will cover the last 20 percent of the total grade.

Conclusion

This paper presents the curriculum design used in a Persuasion class which exposes the student to the work ethics of the professional environment and tends to reduce the distance between education and practice. It not only bridges the gap between practical application and classroom theory, but it provides a breakthrough for on-the-job performance. Furthermore, the experience in the real world provides the opportunity for the students to create a portfolio evidencing how their practical knowledge has been gained.

This curriculum design is an effort toward contributing a plausible on-the-job dimension to education. A college graduate with this type of experience in the world of work may have an advantage in securing a job because the experience provides trial employment and builds rapport between the professional and the student. More research and greater dialogue is needed between educators and practitioners in order to reduce the distance between the classroom and professional practice.

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